

Upon the passage of this bill into law, thousands of Waco citizens who visit the U.S. Post Office at 424 Clay Avenue, just blocks away from the Waco VA regional office, will be touched by the life and sacrifice of the young man raised in their neighborhood.

It is my hope that Hispanic Americans, who have time and again served our Nation in combat with distinction, will take special pride in knowing that Private First Class Covarrubias will forever stand as a symbol of all Hispanics who so patriotically served America in uniform.

I especially want to thank my friend, a Vietnam veteran and a great veterans leader, Robert Gamboa, for working on this legislation to ensure that Mr. Covarrubias's service would never be forgotten.

Madam Speaker, I believe the families and loved ones of our servicemen and women are truly the unsung heroes and heroines in our Nation's defense. That is why I want to express my respect to the family of Mr. Covarrubias, his 97-year-old father, Juan Covarrubias; his brother, Gilbert; his sister, Irene Covarrubias Ramirez; and his daughter, Tammy Covarrubias Boyett.

I would also like to say to the Covarrubias family, which sacrificed so much for the American family, that a grateful Nation owes you a great, deep debt of gratitude.

I would like to say to Tammy that while you never got to know your father in person, I hope you will always be proud that he loved you so much that he was willing to sacrifice his life for the country in which his little girl would be raised. Surely he must look down upon you now from a special place in heaven reserved for those who would lay down their lives for their neighbors.

To Private Covarrubias's father, I would say, myself, as the father of two young sons, that no father should ever have to see his own son buried. But I hope you take comfort and pride in knowing that the spirit of your son that you helped bring into this world will be touching and inspiring the lives of others long after we are gone.

Juan Alonso Covarrubias is an American hero who gave his life in defending our country in Vietnam. We humbly recognize that we could never fully repay him or his family and loved ones for their loss. But I hope and pray that honoring him in this way will celebrate his dedicated service and preserve his memory.

Madam Speaker, with honor and respect for the life of Juan Alonso Covarrubias, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3720.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3720.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THOSE PERSONS, GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES THAT ARE IMPOVERISHED, DISADVANTAGED OR OTHERWISE IN POVERTY

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 198) expressing the sense of Congress that the United States has a moral responsibility to meet the needs of those persons, groups and communities that are impoverished, disadvantaged or otherwise in poverty, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 198

Whereas poverty can be seen as a deep, structural problem that implicates our value system and our educational and economic institutions;

Whereas poverty may be defined as the lack of basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing, health care, education, security, and opportunity;

Whereas policy initiatives addressing poverty have not kept pace with the needs of millions of Americans;

Whereas many experts believe that the lack of an equitable distribution of housing choices across the country leads to isolation and concentrated poverty;

Whereas the number of Americans living in poverty has risen by over 5,000,000 since 2000;

Whereas there were 37 million Americans living in poverty in 2005;

Whereas the official poverty rate in 2005 was 12.6 percent;

Whereas 24.9 percent of African Americans, 21.8 percent of Hispanics, 25.3 percent of Native Americans, 10.9 percent of Asian Americans, and 8.3 percent of Whites lived in poverty in the United States in 2005;

Whereas in 2005 a family of 4 was considered poor under the U.S. Census Bureau's official measure if the family's income was below \$19,971;

Whereas the poverty rate for children 18 years and younger (17.6 percent) remained higher than that of 18-24 year-olds (11.1 percent) and that of people 65 and older (10.1 percent) in 2005; and

Whereas the number in poverty increased for people 65 and older by almost 400,000 since 2000: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that the United States should set a national goal of cutting poverty in half over the next 10 years.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia?

There was no objection.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues in consideration of H. Con. Res. 198, as amended, which expresses the sense of Congress that the United States has a moral responsibility to meet the needs of those persons, groups and communities that are impoverished, disadvantaged or otherwise in poverty.

H. Con. Res. 198 was introduced by Representative BARBARA LEE on August 1, 2007, and was amended and reported from the Oversight Committee on December 12 by a voice vote. The measure has the support and sponsorship of 80 Members of Congress and reminds each of us of the important role we play in the battle against poverty.

Madam Speaker, I want to continue with certain of my remarks in the RECORD, but I would like to make other remarks at this time.

We have just come from the celebration of the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr. His signature issues, of course, were war and peace and poverty, falling only behind civil rights. It's clear that he achieved what he desired, certainly much of what we desired, because during the 1960s there were three seminal civil rights bills passed, long-time goals of African Americans, other people of color, and many in this Chamber.

But two of King's goals remain completely without remedy. One, of course, is war and peace, and you can imagine where he would have been on the war in Iraq. But perhaps, most telling, is that we celebrated Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday at a time when the gap between rich and poor is considerably wider than when King died.

Therefore, I am not sure whether the gentlewoman from California had in mind that we would bring this bill up right after Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, but there it is, and that makes it all the more timely.

As it turns out, though, Madam Speaker, the state of the economy has rendered this issue high on the national agenda for the first time in many years. For the first time, the entire Congress will be looking or should be looking at those who have the least in our society and why. I am afraid it's not because of their high priority. They are the lowest voting group. They sometimes are invisible. But the fact is that economists across the board have said that we need to enact a stimulus package yesterday, and that in order for it to have any effect, and, in fact, not be effective when it might do more harm than good, we need to get the stimulus package in the pockets of people who can spend the money immediately.

Therefore, many of us think that the people we know who will spend the money tomorrow are the people who have no money to spend. The people who run out of food stamps in the middle of the month. The people who have run out of unemployment security. The people who need the most but who have the lowest profile often in the Congress now have assumed importance because of the state of the economy.

Madam Speaker, what is most distressing was to see that the poverty rate increased even for people 65 and over by almost 400,000 people. The one group of people that, in fact, gets some attention in the Congress, of course, are the elderly. They are the highest percentage of voting people; yet, their poverty rate is going up. That is very distressing since they are on fixed incomes and are least able to do something about it. They don't get unemployment insurance, many of them don't.

I am particularly concerned about the people who don't show up on the tax rolls. Many, if not most of them, pay payroll taxes. The only way to focus on them is to focus on them who needs, who will spend the money first should get the money first.

My concern about the baby boomers, those over 65, is not only that they should be in this group. I know they will spend the money instantly. But my concern is to wonder whether or not this is a harbinger of the baby boomers, the first baby boomers have just come forward, whether we are about to see that huge group of people show up, bringing increased pressure on the economy.

So I compliment the gentlelady from California for coming forward with a bill that I am sure will have bipartisan support.

In the District of Columbia, I have to tell her that we are not a poor city. We are second per capita in Federal income taxes and, therefore, a lot of middle-class and rich people in the District of Columbia, but one of every three children in the District of Columbia lives in poverty.

I want to make sure that whatever we do to stimulate the economy or to pay attention to this resolution hits those children very quickly. We have 10 percent of District residents living in extreme poverty, even though the District cannot be counted among those cities which have lost so much, many of them lost a base, because we have the Federal Government here, because even our real estate industry continues to boom.

□ 1430

Madam Speaker, I think this timely resolution is important not only for its own sake, but because it draws our attention to what I believe will be a first priority for the Congress this session, especially today as our congressional leadership on both sides of the aisle are meeting with the President of the United States on the very stimulus package that I have described.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SHAYS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge passage of H. Con. Res. 198 which expresses the sense of Congress that we have a moral responsibility as a Nation to meet the needs of those persons, groups and communities that are impoverished, disadvantaged or otherwise in poverty.

Madam Speaker, it is fitting that a day after the celebration of the life and achievement of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., we are taking up a resolution that addresses our obligation to help many of those that Dr. King had particular concern for, the downtrodden, the underserved and the impoverished.

I believe we all seek, as Dr. King did, to create a just society and to alleviate poverty and its attendant suffering. We may differ on methods, we may differ on who and how and how many, but broad prosperity for all is, I believe, the goal of virtually everyone who graces this Chamber.

This resolution seeks to bring attention to poverty and the responsibility we have as citizens of this Nation and this world to help relieve the suffering of others. This responsibility does not fall only to the Federal Government, but it will be solved only through the collective efforts of not just governments at every level, but charities, businesses and individuals.

We are told the poor will always be among us, but that does not relieve us of the challenge of trying to alleviate the suffering, tend to their needs, and improve to the extent we can their lot in life.

I commend our colleague, Representative LEE, for reminding us of this, and I, too, think it is a wonderful coincidence, that we are taking this resolution on the day we have all come back from celebrations recognizing that the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. didn't lead a rebellion, which is a failed revolution, he led a revolution. And he spoke to this young person, me, in the 1950s when I saw Little Rock with military forces and I wondered as a child what was happening to my country. Reverend King helped guide all of us in a direction that has done so much to address many of the concerns he championed. His dream is not dead, it is still alive and it is a dream that we need to carry into the future.

It wasn't a mindless dream, it was a dream based on the promise of America. He spoke to our better nature and lifted all of us. He spoke to the oppressor and to the oppressed, those with much and those with very little, and those with nothing.

Reverend King belongs to all of us. We have a duty, as I think my colleague Representative LEE will point out. We have a duty and obligation and a wonderful opportunity to heed his call to action.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield such time as she may desire to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) who authored the resolution.

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, let me thank the gentlelady from the District of Columbia, not only for managing this resolution today, but for your long-standing work in addressing injustice everywhere, including economic justice which goes to the heart of this resolution.

Also let me take a moment to thank my colleague, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) for your leadership and for your support and for your commitment to eliminate poverty; to Speaker NANCY PELOSI; our majority leader, STENY HOYER; Chairman WAXMAN and Ranking Member TOM DAVIS. I want to commend them and thank them for their strong support in bringing this very important resolution forward today because I think the bipartisan support for this shows and demonstrates that we all understand very clearly this is not a Democratic or Republican issue, it is not an urban issue or rural issue, this is a moral issue that we must address together.

I would like to recognize all 83 cosponsors who have worked hard on this resolution. Your support has been critical in helping to move it forward.

Also to those who co-chair the Congressional Out of Poverty Caucus with me: Congressman CONYERS, Chairman BACA, who chairs the Congressional Hispanic Caucus; Congressman HONDA, who chairs the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus; and Congressman BUTTERFIELD. Their dedication and commitment is crucial to our broader goal of ending poverty.

I would also like to thank our staff, Alexis Brandt of the majority leader's office; Bill Goold of the Congressional Progressive Caucus; Leila Gomez of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, who works in my office and has done a tremendous job on this; Tunde Eboda, who was a Brookings Fellow in my office; and Chris Lee of my staff. All of our staffs have really kept focused and worked together and have worked very hard to make sure that this resolution received the support that it has received.

Madam Speaker, the resolution before us today is really very straightforward. It simply states that Congress supports setting a national goal of cutting poverty in half over the next 10 years. It is unfortunate that in the wealthiest country in the world that we even need this resolution, but the fact is that we do.

As both the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) reminded us, yesterday we took the time out to honor what would have been Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 79th birthday, and as we reflect upon his life and his legacy and the struggle for civil and human rights, for peace and

for justice, it is important also to reflect upon how far we have strayed from his vision to eradicate poverty.

So this resolution is just one small step in honoring his legacy in more than words. It is one small legislative action we can do today to say we, too, believe that not only on his birthday but throughout the year we have a responsibility to live his legacy and do what we can do to eliminate poverty.

Our country is the land of opportunity. But the sad reality is that income inequality continues to grow and more people are falling into poverty than getting ahead. Just consider the fact that over 37 million Americans, more than the population of my home State of California, are in poverty, and the number has grown by 5 million within the last 5 to 6 years. One in eight Americans lives in poverty now. Poverty in the United States is far higher than in many other developed nations, and inequality is at an all-time high.

The richest 1 percent of Americans in 2005 held the largest share of the Nation's income since 1925; and at the same time, the poorest 20 percent held only 3.4 percent of the Nation's income.

Madam Speaker, I will include for the RECORD a document titled "From Poverty to Prosperity." It was put forth by the Center for American Progress' Task Force on Poverty.

The statistics in this report and other reports quantify what most of us already know, that we are heading in the wrong direction, and that we need a national commitment to address the growing poverty crisis in this Nation.

This resolution helps us get back on track by setting an achievable, and in my view a very modest goal, of cutting poverty in half over the next decade.

Madam Speaker, perhaps the greatest example of the profound need for action to address the poverty crisis in our Nation was Hurricane Katrina and the incredible suffering that it brought to so many, and which continues today.

The facts speak for themselves. One-third of those displaced by Hurricane Katrina had incomes below 1½ times the poverty line. The storm had its greatest impact on people of color, affecting African Americans who accounted for nearly half of those affected. The gulf coast hurricane should have been a wake-up call. Unfortunately, the administration chose only to hit the snooze button.

That is why I am glad we are here today in a bipartisan way helping to sound this alarm again. By setting our sights to tackling poverty head-on, we can take some very serious steps towards bridging the gap between the haves and the have-nots. There is much work to be done.

Last year again, this important document on the state of poverty in America made several important proposals. The Center based its recommendations on four principles: Promote decent work, promoting opportunity for all,

ensuring economic security for all, and helping people build wealth. Based on these principles, the report offers 12 key steps, including raising the minimum wage, and many of the efforts which we have been engaging in in this Congress, but much more needs to be done.

So as we consider an income stimulus plan in the next few weeks, I hope we keep these points in mind. Fighting poverty isn't a mystery, it just requires us to make a commitment to the goal and to dedicate the necessary resources to do this.

This resolution is an important step forward, and I urge my colleagues to support it and join me and my colleagues in the Out of Poverty Caucus in our efforts to eliminate poverty in America. This is a moral imperative which we must all embrace.

FROM POVERTY TO PROSPERITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thirty-seven million Americans live below the official poverty line. Millions more struggle each month to pay for basic necessities, or run out of savings when they lose their jobs or face health emergencies. Poverty imposes enormous costs on society. The lost potential of children raised in poor households, the lower productivity and earnings of poor adults, the poor health, increased crime, and broken neighborhoods all hurt our nation. Persistent childhood poverty is estimated to cost our nation \$500 billion each year, or about 4 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product. In a world of increasing global competition, we cannot afford to squander these human resources.

The Center for American Progress last year convened a diverse group of national experts and leaders to examine the causes and consequences of poverty in America and make recommendations for national action. In this report, our Task Force on Poverty calls for a national goal of cutting poverty in half in the next 10 years and proposes a strategy to reach the goal.

Our nation has seen periods of dramatic poverty reduction at times when near-full employment was combined with sound federal and state policies, motivated individual initiative, supportive civic involvement, and sustained national commitment. In the last six years, however, our nation has moved in the opposite direction. The number of poor Americans has grown by five million, while inequality has reached historic high levels.

Consider the following facts:

One in eight Americans now lives in poverty. A family of four is considered poor if the family's income is below \$19,971—a bar far below what most people believe a family needs to get by. Still, using this measure, 12.6 percent of all Americans were poor in 2005, and more than 90 million people (31 percent of all Americans) had incomes below 200 percent of federal poverty thresholds.

Millions of Americans will spend at least one year in poverty at some point in their lives. One third of all Americans will experience poverty within a 13-year period. In that period, one in 10 Americans are poor for most of the time, and one in 20 are poor for 10 or more years.

Poverty in the United States is far higher than in many other developed nations. At the turn of the 21st century, the United States ranked 24th among 25 countries when measuring the share of the population below 50 percent of median income.

Inequality has reached record highs. The richest one percent of Americans in 2005 had

the largest share of the nation's income (19 percent) since 1929. At the same time, the poorest 20 percent of Americans had only 3.4 percent of the nation's income.

It does not have to be this way. Our nation need not tolerate persistent poverty alongside great wealth.

The United States should set a national goal of cutting poverty in half over the next 10 years. A strategy to cut poverty in half should be guided by four principles:

Promote Decent Work. People should work and work should pay enough to ensure that workers and their families can avoid poverty, meet basic needs, and save for the future.

Provide Opportunity for All. Children should grow up in conditions that maximize their opportunities for success; adults should have opportunities throughout their lives to connect to work, get more education, live in a good neighborhood, and move up in the workforce.

Ensure Economic Security. Americans should not fall into poverty when they cannot work or work is unavailable, unstable, or pays so little that they cannot make ends meet.

Help People Build Wealth. All Americans should have the opportunity to build assets that allow them to weather periods of flux and volatility, and to have the resources that may be essential to advancement and upward mobility.

We recommend 12 key steps to cut poverty in half:

1. Raise and index the minimum wage to half the average hourly wage. At \$5.15, the federal minimum wage is at its lowest level in real terms since 1956. The federal minimum wage was once 50 percent of the average wage but is now 30 percent of that wage. Congress should restore the minimum wage to 50 percent of the average wage, about \$8.40 an hour in 2006. Doing so would help over 4.5 million poor workers and nearly nine million other low-income workers.

2. Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. As an earnings supplement for low-income working families, the EITC raises incomes and helps families build assets. EITC expansions during the 1990s helped increase employment and reduced poverty. But the current EITC does little to help workers without children. We recommend tripling the EITC for childless workers, and expanding help to larger working families. Doing so would cut the number of people in poverty by over two million. The Child Tax Credit provides a tax credit of up to \$1,000 per child, but provides no help to the poorest families. We recommend making it available to all low- and moderate-income families. Doing so would move two million children and one million parents out of poverty.

3. Promote unionization by enacting the Employee Free Choice Act. The Employee Free Choice Act would require employers to recognize a union after a majority of workers signs cards authorizing union representation and establish stronger penalties for violation of employee rights. The increased union representation made possible by the Act would lead to better jobs and less poverty for American workers.

4. Guarantee child care assistance to low-income families and promote early education for all. We propose that the federal and state governments guarantee child care help to families with incomes below about \$40,000 a year, and also expand the child care tax credit. At the same time, states should be encouraged to improve the quality of early education and broaden access for all children. Our child care expansion would raise employment among low-income parents and help nearly three million parents and children escape poverty.

5. Create two million new “opportunity” housing vouchers, and promote equitable development in and around central cities. Nearly 8 million Americans live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty where at least 40 percent of residents are poor. Our nation should seek to end concentrated poverty and economic segregation, and promote regional equity and inner-city revitalization. We propose that over the next 10 years the federal government fund two million new “opportunity vouchers” designed to help people live in opportunity-rich areas. New affordable housing should be in communities with employment opportunities and high-quality public services, or in gentrifying communities. These housing policies should be part of a broader effort to pursue equitable development strategies in regional and local planning effects, including efforts to improve schools, create affordable housing, assure physical security, and enhance neighborhood amenities.

6. Connect disadvantaged and disconnected youth with school and work. About 1.7 million poor youth ages 16 to 24 were out of school and out of work in 2005. We recommend that the federal government restore Youth Opportunity Grants to help the most disadvantaged communities and expand funding for effective and promising youth programs—with the goal of reaching 600,000 poor disadvantaged youth through these efforts. We propose a new Upward Pathway program to offer low-income youth opportunities to participate in service and training in fields that are in high-demand and provide needed public services.

7. Simplify and expand Pell Grants and make higher education accessible to residents of each state.

Low-income youth are much less likely to attend college than their higher income peers, even among those of comparable abilities. Pell Grants play a crucial role for lower-income students. We propose to simplify the Pell grant application process, gradually raise Pell Grants to reach 70 percent of the average costs of attending a four-year public institution, and encourage institutions to do more to raise student completion rates. As the federal government does its part, states should develop strategies to make post-secondary education affordable for all residents, following promising models already underway in a number of states.

8. Help former prisoners find stable employment and reintegrate into their communities. The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. We urge all states to develop comprehensive reentry services aimed at reintegrating former prisoners into their communities with full-time, consistent employment.

9. Ensure equity for low-wage workers in the Unemployment Insurance system. Only about 35 percent of the unemployed, and a smaller share of unemployed low-wage workers, receive unemployment insurance benefits. We recommend that states (with federal help) reform “monetary eligibility” rules that screen out low-wage workers, broaden eligibility for part-time workers and workers who have lost employment as a result of compelling family circumstances, and allow unemployed workers to use periods of unemployment as a time to upgrade their skills and qualifications.

10. Modernize means-tested benefits programs to develop a coordinated system that helps workers and families. A well-functioning safety net should help people get into or return to work and ensure a decent level of living for those who cannot work or are temporarily between jobs. Our current system fails to do so. We recommend that governments at all levels simplify and improve benefits access for working families

and improve services to individuals with disabilities. The Food Stamp Program should be strengthened to improve benefits, eligibility, and access. And the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program should be reformed to shift its focus from cutting caseloads to helping needy families find sustainable employment.

11. Reduce the high costs of being poor and increase access to financial services. Despite having less income, lower-income families often pay more than middle and high-income families for the same consumer products. We recommend that the federal and state governments should address the foreclosure crisis through expanded mortgage assistance programs and by new federal legislation to curb unscrupulous practices. And we propose that the federal government establish a \$50 million Financial Fairness Innovation Fund to support state efforts to broaden access to mainstream goods and financial services in predominantly low-income communities.

12. Expand and simplify the Saver's Credit to encourage saving for education, homeownership and retirement. For many families, saving for purposes such as education, a home, or a small business is key to making economic progress. We propose that the federal “Saver's Credit” be reformed to make it fully refundable. This Credit should also be broadened to apply to other appropriate savings vehicles intended to foster asset accumulation, with consideration given to including individual development accounts, children's saving accounts, and college savings plans.

We believe our recommendations will cut poverty in half. The Urban Institute, which modeled the implementation of one set of our recommendations, estimates that four of our steps would reduce poverty by 26 percent, bringing us more than halfway toward our goal. Among their findings:

Taken together, our minimum wage, EITC, child credit, and child care recommendations would reduce poverty by 26 percent. This would mean over nine million fewer people in poverty and a national poverty rate of 9.1 percent—the lowest in recorded U.S. history.

The racial poverty gap would be narrowed. White poverty would fall from 8.7 percent to 7 percent. Poverty among African Americans would fall from 21.4 percent to 15.6 percent. Hispanic poverty would fall from 21.4 percent to 12.9 percent and poverty for all others would fall from 12.7 percent to 10.3 percent.

Child poverty and extreme poverty would both fall. Child poverty would drop by 41 percent. The number of people in extreme poverty would fall by over two million.

Millions of low- and moderate-income families would benefit. Almost half of the benefits would help low- and moderate-income families.

That these recommendations would reduce poverty by more than one quarter is powerful evidence that a 50 percent reduction can be reached within a decade.

The combined cost of our principal recommendations is in the range of \$90 billion a year—a significant cost but one that is necessary and could be readily funded through a fairer tax system. An additional \$90 billion in annual spending would represent about 0.8 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product, which is a fraction of the money spent on tax changes that benefited primarily the wealthy in recent years. Consider that:

The current annual costs of the tax cuts enacted by Congress in 2001 and 2003 are in the range of \$400 billion a year.

In 2008 alone the value of the tax cuts to households with incomes exceeding \$200,000 a year is projected to be \$100 billion.

Our recommendations could be fully paid for simply by bringing better balance to the federal tax system and recouping part of

what has been lost by the excessive tax cuts of recent years. We recognize that serious action has serious costs, but the challenge before the nation is not whether we can afford to act, but rather that we must decide to act.

THE NEXT STEPS

In 2009, we will have a new president and a new Congress. Across the nation, there is a yearning for a shared national commitment to build a better, fairer, more prosperous country, with opportunity for all. In communities across the nation, policymakers, business people, people of faith, and concerned citizens are coming together. Our commitment to the common good compels us to move forward.

POVERTY TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Angela Glover Blackwell, Founder and CEO, PolicyLink (co-chair).

Peter B. Edelman, Professor of Law, Georgetown University (co-chair).

Rebecca Blank, Dean, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, Henry Carter Adams Collegiate Professor of Public Policy, University of Michigan.

Linda Chavez-Thompson, Executive Vice President, AFL-CIO.

Reverend Dr. Floyd H. Flake, President, Wilberforce University.

Wizipan Garriott, Law Student and Board President of the He Sapa Leadership Academy.

Maude Hurd, National President, ACORN.

Charles E. M. Kolb, President, Committee for Economic Development.

Meizhu Lui, Executive Director, United for a Fair Economy.

Alice M. Rivlin, Senior Fellow and Director, Greater Washington Research Program, Brookings Institution.

Barbara J. Robles, Associate Professor, Arizona State University.

Robert Solow, Professor Emeritus, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Dorothy Stoneman, Founder and President, YouthBuild USA.

Wellington E. Webb, Former Mayor of Denver.

Mr. SHAYS. I had already yielded back my time.

I wonder if the gracious lady would yield me a minute.

Ms. NORTON. I certainly will.

Mr. SHAYS. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time, and I want to agree with everything I have heard to the point of the need to have a stimulus package that recognizes those who have the least resources.

But I do want to say that we also need to recognize that we need to stimulate investment in plants, machinery, and we need to make sure that whatever goods consumers buy are likely to be American products and that we are just not transferring that benefit overseas. So there is going to be a lot that happens, but I agree with my colleagues, we will be able to work together on this issue.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, the poor in our country have assumed a high profile today because of the state of the economy. I hope that the gentlelady's resolution helps us to bear in mind that the poor in our country need a higher profile throughout the 110th Congress.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 198, expressing the sense of Con-

gress that the United States has a moral responsibility to meet the needs of those persons, groups and communities that are impoverished, disadvantaged or otherwise in poverty, introduced by my distinguished colleague from California, Representative BARBARA LEE. Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, co-founder of the Out of Poverty Caucus, has articulated a national goal to reduce poverty by 50 percent over the next 10 years. This legislation is an imperative instrument in addressing the ongoing endemic that is poverty in America.

Approximately 36.5 million American citizens, 12.3 percent of United States population, live in poverty. The incidence of destitution is associated with race and ethnicity, location, family composition, age, and education. America has allowed poverty to fall off the national agenda. In a nation as industrial and prominent as the United States, it seems paradoxical to have such high levels of poverty. During the 1960s, when President Johnson made poverty a national concern, policies and programs were created to set into motion a series of bills and acts which "brought about real results, reduced rates of poverty, and improved living standards for America's poor."

Madam Speaker, it is essential that this Congress satisfies the needs of Americans who are impoverished, disadvantaged, or otherwise in poverty; this legislation requires that we acknowledge that responsibility. While poverty is believed by some to be a statistical phenomenon, it is in fact a daily reality for millions of Americans. Policy proposals addressing poverty have not kept pace with the needs of millions of Americans. The measure of poverty is simple but rather crude. Poverty cannot be accurately evaluated until we can essentially comprehend the number of people in poverty.

When Mollie Orshansky, renowned economist and statistician, defined the poverty line in the 1960s, she used a farm family living in the 1950s as her model, nevertheless times have changed. In this day and age, an income of \$20,000 is not sufficient for a family of four to survive. Journalist Barbara Ehrenreht worked alongside the "near poor" in her non-fiction piece "Nickel and Dime." Ten years ago, a family in her book earned \$40,000 a year cumulatively, but was still unable to afford suitable housing. An annual income of \$20,000 in 1950 and \$40,000 in 1998 for a family of four is "unpretentious." Technology has advanced, times have changed, the price of living is constantly rising, and those factors, along with many others should be used to evaluate how a family can survive.

Many impoverished individuals are believed to be able to return to self-sufficiency with 12–18 months of assistance and affordable housing. Since its conception, welfare has caused countless economic, political, psychological, and sociological effects that have shaped American society, produced innumerable reforms and depicted its recipients as irresponsible agents of self-inflicted poverty. In 1996, the Republican-led Congress introduced welfare reform. If the objective was to reduce the number of people on the welfare rolls, it worked; however, poverty did not decline. The central goal that needs to be established is how to decrease poverty while simultaneously placing welfare recipients in a position to maintain an existence above the poverty line after assistance. Welfare is not a substantial economic alternative; in no state do welfare

disbursements alone lift a family above the poverty line. The Federal Government must play a vital role in revitalizing and restoring opportunities for Americans to reach the American dream.

Congress is morally obligated to provide better services to meet the needs of its citizens; nevertheless, the quality of the services for various groups differs greatly. The aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita demonstrated that sub-par services are readily available to minorities. While many existing organizations have worked to help those displaced, and some new groups and special efforts have been initiated, the survivors of Hurricane Katrina are still largely disorganized and deprived. In the United States, the incidence of poverty is associated with race and ethnicity, location, family composition, age, and education. Three years ago, the criticisms of the Government's response to Hurricane Katrina generally consisted of condemnations of negligence and lack of leadership in the relief efforts in response to the storm and its aftermath. Currently, the principal criticism is the long overdue assistance for the poverty-stricken.

The U.S. has a higher sense of poverty and a visible phenomenon of poverty than any other country. Internationally, the United States poverty rate at the turn of the 21st century ranked 24th of 25 countries, with only Mexico having a higher percentage rate.

This important piece of legislation will recognize the continuing need of many Americans. This is extremely significant in the sense that it will assist those who desire upward mobility and believe in the "American Dream." This is an unprecedented step forward for impoverished Americans and I applaud this legislation for this significant first step towards helping American realize their dreams.

As we celebrate Dr. King's birthday, we also commemorate the 40th anniversary of King's Poor People's Campaign which, through non-violent direct action, King hoped to focus the Nation's attention on economic inequality and poverty. I strongly urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this extremely important legislation.

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 198, a resolution introduced by Congresswoman BARBARA LEE that expresses the sense of Congress that the United States should set a national goal of cutting poverty in half over the next 10 years.

Poverty can be defined as meaning a lack of the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing, health care, education, security, and opportunity. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2006 over 38.7 million men, women and children across this country struggled to survive on an annual income well below the national poverty line. The number of people living in poverty has increased by over 5 million since the year 2000. In a country that prides itself on being the land of freedom and opportunity, and that has a level of affluence unparalleled by any other nation in the world, these statistics are both alarming and unacceptable.

I am a proud cosponsor of H. Con. Res. 198 because I believe that any nation that considers itself great must make a concerted effort to step up and do something about the problem of poverty. When the average national poverty rate is at 13.3 percent and growing, the status of poverty in this country

should not be diagnosed as simply an unfortunate anomaly, but rather, as a nationwide epidemic; an epidemic that should be treated with the utmost care and concern, because it is a condition that affects all of us. Poverty erodes the health and security of our Nation's most valuable resources—our children and our communities. Strong, healthy communities are necessary for the preservation of the American way of life, a way of life that cannot exist when infected by the ills that are symptomatic of poverty stricken areas.

In addition, poverty hits hardest those with the least amount of immunity against the conditions that contribute to poverty. While minority communities have made many significant advancements over the past few decades, a disproportionate number of minorities are still impoverished and disadvantaged. African Americans comprise nearly 25 percent of people living in poverty, Hispanics 22 percent, and Asian Americans nearly 11 percent. Native American communities capture an astounding 25.3 percent of people living under the poverty level, many living in what are considered "fourth world" poverty conditions. Many Native Americans on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservations will not make it through the winter due to inadequate housing, warm clothing, and nourishment. In this country, and in this day and age, these numbers are simply deplorable. Unfortunately, they do not stop there.

More than half of those living at or below the Federal poverty level come from single parent households, and children ages 18 and younger have the highest rate of poverty of any age group with 17.6 percent living at or below the poverty line. Instead of receiving a proper education in school, learning valuable life-lessons and leadership skills in extra-curricular activities, and partaking in the many other childhood activities that are a necessary part of growing up, nearly 13 million kids will spend the day wondering whether or not they are going to eat that night, or whether their mother or father will be drunk or in prison when they get home, that is assuming they even have a place to go home to. Nevertheless, these children are expected to perform well in schools, meet the national score on standardized tests, or risk having their school shut down thanks to No Child Left Behind system. Children who live under such conditions are not destined to succeed. Most will not graduate from high school. Many will turn to gangs, drugs, or a life of crime, and as a result, spend most of their adult life in and out of prison.

Poverty is the result of a deep structural problem that implicates our value system as well as our educational and economic institutions, and it is a problem that permeates into all aspects of society. The costs to victims of poverty are great, but the costs to us are greater.

That is why I wholeheartedly emphatically support the commitment to cutting poverty made by H. Con. Res. 198. It will not be easy, but there is a moral, and social urgency facing us. We have the opportunity today to impact the lives of millions and give others the opportunity to share in the great wealth that our nation has to offer.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, in the richest country in the world, no one should go to bed hungry, no one should have to go without heat on a cold winter night, and no one should be deprived of life saving medicine because they can't afford it.

It is so sad that in our country, the richest in the world, 37 million people live below the poverty line and deal with these fears every day.

As a Congress, we need to do more to help these people, which is why I am proud to stand in support of Congresswoman BARBARA LEE's bill, H. Con. Res. 198, and the goal of cutting poverty in the U.S. in half in the next 10 years.

This bill, recognizing the problem of poverty in our country is a good start, but we need to do more. We can put our money where our mouths are, starting with an economic stimulus package that gets money to the people who need it most in an economic downturn. This can be done by extending unemployment insurance and food stamps to help the neediest among us . . . not by extending tax breaks for the richest people in this country who have amassed great wealth at the expense of the rest of us. Let's do the right thing and help those who actually need it.

Madam Speaker, again I thank Representative LEE for her leadership in fighting poverty and for bringing this resolution to the floor and urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. STARK. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of resolving to cut poverty in half over the next 10 years. America is the richest country in the history of the world, yet 37 million Americans languish in poverty. The poverty rate is an inexcusable 17 percent for all children and 33 percent for black children. As a body, Congress has a moral obligation to alleviate poverty and provide all people with opportunities to lead healthy and independent lives.

The resolution, H. Con. Res. 198, before us is simple: it puts Congress and the Nation on the clock and acknowledges our collective responsibility to the impoverished and disadvantaged. As a country, we spend more than all other countries combined on our military and ongoing wars. Yet, our poverty rate is dead last among developed nations. Clearly, we have the financial ability to drastically reduce the number of people living in poverty. The question is do we have the political will.

I believe the answer is yes. During the 1960s the poverty rate fell from over 22.2 percent to 12.6 percent. These gains were brought about by the creation and expansion of a strong safety net supported by programs such as Medicaid, food stamps, and AFDC. Now, the safety net is frayed and under constant attack from those who don't blink when approving the \$500 billion to fight the Iraq war, but would like to see crucial entitlement programs "wither on the vine." This resolution rejects the failed ideology that has brought us the manmade disaster in New Orleans and the shame of an additional 5 million people living in poverty since 2000.

As we celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday, we must redouble our efforts to fight poverty. Congress has to expand SCHIP and continue moving toward universal health care. We need to ensure that all families can afford childcare, decent housing, nutritious meals, and a good education. These are basic human rights. As a society, our obligation is to lift those who are disadvantaged and provide opportunities. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and rededicate ourselves to eradicating poverty.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong and unwavering support for H. Con.

Res. 198 and am pleased to be a co-sponsor on this Congressional Resolution that draws attention to the approximately 37 million Americans who live in poverty. In particular, I am bound and determined to meeting the Resolution's goal of cutting poverty in half over the next 10 years.

The number of impoverished Floridians increased from 859,888 in 2000 to 943,670 in 2005, a 9.7 percent rise, representing almost 6 percent of the total population. Over those years, Broward County's severely poor grew from 77,942 to 82,327, while Miami-Dade's poverty rate of 6.8 percent was among the highest in the State.

African Americans and Hispanics have poverty rates far above the poverty rate for Caucasians. In 2005, 24.9 percent of African Americans (9.2 million) and 21.8 percent of Hispanics (94 million) had incomes below poverty, compared to 8.3 percent of non-Hispanic whites (16.2 million) and 11.1 percent of Asians (1.4 million). Although African-Americans represent only 12.6 percent of the total population, they make up 24.8 percent of the poor population.

And among those that are the highest of our country's poor are our children. In 2005, 12.3 million children (17.1 percent) were poor. For African American children, this statistic is even higher—in 2005, 34.2 percent of black children were poor (3.7 million). This is inexcusable in a country where so many live in great wealth.

Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.

It is time to change these statistics. Our citizens with minimal education, and our citizens without a job are among those that are the most susceptible to poverty. Clearly, Americans need to work. We need to do what we have to do to make this happen.

And we need to do this soon, and not drag our feet on this important issue. This Resolution will motivate us to get moving and gives us a very necessary goal—to cut poverty in half over the next 10 years.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 198, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

JUDGE RICHARD B. ALLSBROOK POST OFFICE

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4211) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service lo-

cated at 725 Roanoke Avenue in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, as the "Judge Richard B. Allsbrook Post Office".

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4211

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. JUDGE RICHARD B. ALLSBROOK POST OFFICE.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 725 Roanoke Avenue in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, shall be known and designated as the "Judge Richard B. Allsbrook Post Office".

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the "Judge Richard B. Allsbrook Post Office".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia? There was no objection.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am pleased to join my colleagues in consideration of H.R. 4211 which names a postal facility in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, the Judge Richard B. Allsbrook Post Office.

H.R. 4211 was introduced by Representative BUTTERFIELD of North Carolina on November 15, 2007. It was reported from the House Oversight Committee on December 12, 2007 by voice vote. This measure has been co-sponsored by 12 Members and has support of the entire North Carolina congressional delegation.

I am asking the House to join me in honoring Judge Richard B. Allsbrook, a dedicated civil servant, who passed away in October 2007.

Judge Allsbrook served his country as a second lieutenant in the United States Navy before becoming an attorney in North Carolina at a family law firm. In 1978, Judge Allsbrook was appointed resident superior court judge for the Sixth Judicial District, from which he retired in September 2000. In addition, he served as a mediator in the North Carolina judicial system, and was sitting president of the Roanoke Rapids Chamber of Commerce.

□ 1445

The community was deeply touched by his efforts. Madam Speaker, I urge swift passage of this bill.